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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7212th meeting
Thursday, 26 June 2014, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. De Antueno
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Llanos
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaite
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Rwanda	Mr. Manzi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014) (S/2014/427)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014) (S/2014/427)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2014/427, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014).

I now give the floor to Ms. Amos.

Ms. Amos: This is the fourth briefing to the Council since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014) on humanitarian access issues in Syria. The resolution demands action by parties to the conflict in a number of areas, including ceasing attacks against civilians and doing everything in their power to facilitate rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need of assistance. With its adoption, we had all hoped for a significant improvement in the situation on the ground. However, I again regret to inform the Council that violence and attacks on civilians by all parties to the conflict and human rights abuses continue unabated, with devastating consequences for those affected.

There have been numerous examples of targeted or indiscriminate attacks on civilians in densely populated areas, in violation of the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. The failure to respect and protect the lives of civilians was, for example, apparent on the morning of 18 June, when barrel bombs were dropped on a camp for displaced people in Al-Shajara in southern Syria, near the border with Jordan. Around 350 families lived in the camp. Dozens of people, including women and children, were killed.

Countless others have lost their lives or been injured as the conflict continues to rage in other parts of country, including in the governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Idlib, Dar'a, Rural Damascus and Deir ez-Zor. This morning in Aleppo, at least 17 civilians were reportedly killed and more than 30 injured by barrel bombs dropped near Halawaniyeh Square. Also this morning, at least 15 civilians were killed by aerial strikes targeting numerous neighborhoods in Ar-Raqqa, including an educational facility and a library. On 7 June, 10 people were killed and 55 others were injured when a car bomb went off in Homs city.

Some 241,000 people continue to live under siege conditions, unable to leave their communities, and we are unable to get in to deliver much needed humanitarianumanitarian assistance. Since my last briefing to the Council, only 2,467 people — or 1 per cent of those living in besieged areas — have received much-needed food assistance. This level of obstruction is inhuman and goes against the basic commitment to human dignity and rights that United Nations Member States agreed to in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, which reads in part:

> "The purposes of the United Nations are ... to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian char :ter, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all."

On 21 June, a truce in Yarmouk was agreed between the parties. The agreement foresees the surrender of weapons by non-State armed groups, the withdrawal of foreign fighters, the return of Palestinian refugees, the restoration of basic services and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was not part of the truce agreement and has not been assigned a monitoring role. UNRWA is seeking the support of all parties to ensure it is granted unhindered access, as it has been unable to enter the camp to deliver assistance since early June.

In recent weeks, attacks on civilian infrastructure by armed opposition groups have increased, resulting in significant damage or disruption to water, sewage and electricity networks in the cities of Aleppo, Idlib

and Deir ez-Zor. In Aleppo city, as many as 1 million people remain without safe drinking water after one such attack. In Deir ez-Zor, ongoing fighting, with the deliberate denial of access into the governorate by various opposition groups, has made it increasingly difficult for humanitarian organizations to bring life-saving relief supplies to the area. Over the course of the past two weeks, more than 40,000 people have been displaced to eastern Deir ez-Zor city.

Once again, I remind the Council that targeting or indiscriminately attacking vulnerable civilians constitutes a war crime. There can be no justification for such action. Deliberately obstructing humanitarian access and depriving civilians of access to services essential to their survival is unlawful and inhumane.

In 2011, I told the Council that 1 million people in Syria needed humanitarian assistance. That figure now stands at 10.8 million, 1.5 million more than there were just six months ago. The number of people in need in hard-to-reach areas now stands at 4.7 million, which represents an increase of 1.2 million since resolution 2139 (2014) was adopted in February.

United Nations agencies and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners continue their efforts to meet urgent humanitarian needs. Staff have deployed to difficult and dangerous locations to engage in negotiations to secure access and to deliver much-needed aid. Many have been killed, injured, detained or taken hostage. Nearly 60 aid workers have lost their lives in the course of their work so far. Countless hours have been spent negotiating and facilitating convoy movements, in compliance with complicated and onerous administrative procedures. Despite all these efforts, four years into this war we are unable to sustainably reach nearly half of those identified as being in the direst need.

Insecurity and active conflict play a role in preventing humanitarian access to many locations. However arbitrary restrictions and obstructions, including bureaucratic procedures imposed by the Government, limit or obstruct where, to whom and how often we deliver aid. Some opposition groups have also attacked, threatened and refused to cooperate with humanitarian workers.

In April, the Government of Syria introduced new truck-sealing procedures intended to streamline and ensure safe passage of regular aid deliveries. This new mechanism was poorly implemented and resulted in a large backlog of deliveries. Food assistance fell by nearly 1 million in May and has yet to be restored to previous levels, with only 50 per cent of planned food assistance dispatched in June. On 9 June, the Government announced additional requirements involving the submission of monthly distribution plans and weekly loading plans. In addition, the Government introduced new procedures for the delivery of assistance to hard-to-reach locations through United Nations hubs.

The new procedures require three levels of approval, undermine previous agreements and have caused two successive months of decline in aid deliveries. I cannot describe to the Council the frustration felt by experienced aid workers who have to spend endless hours trying to get agreement for aid deliveries as people's lives hang in the balance. The focus of the Government of Syria remains on controlling the work of the United Nations and its partners. Our focus remains on the people who so desperately need our help.

Despite repeated calls for the free passage of all medicines and surgical equipment in aid convoys, certain items continue to be excluded or removed, depriving tens of thousands of people each month of their basic right to life-saving medical assistance. The Government continues to prohibit the inclusion of medical supplies in shipments intended for opposition-held areas. This deliberate denial of essential medicine and medical equipment undermines the very basis of humanitarian action.

The ability of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to operate in Syria also remains severely constrained due to bureaucratic and operational constraints. A proposed amendment to the existing memorandum of understanding, regulating the work of NGOs and aimed at reducing restrictions, was submitted to the Syrian Government on 26 February. It remains unanswered. Effective humanitarian assistance cannot be delivered without NGOs, which remain an essential partner in the aid effort.

The United Nations and its partners remain committed and prepared to scale up operations and provide life-saving assistance to men, women and children in need throughout the country, despite the challenging and dangerous operational environment on the ground. Nearly 3.3 million people received food assistance from the World Food Programme and partners in May; more than 16 million people were assisted with clean drinking water through the provision of chlorination tablets by UNICEF and partners;

around 2.9 million children were vaccinated against polio in the latest round; 2.3 million people received critically needed non-food items from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners; and 4 million people received medical assistance by the World Health Organization and partners in the first five months of 2014.

However, needs continue to grow and are outpacing our response efforts. We are still unable to provide regular and sustained assistance to 4.7 million people in hard-to-reach areas. The Council has demanded that the parties to the conflict allow and facilitate humanitarian access across conflict-lines and across borders. Resolution 2139 (2014) is clear and unequivocal on this point. We need a scale-up in cross-line and cross-border deliveries to meet growing needs on the ground. Approximately 1.3 million people could be reached via border crossings we have requested with Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. In previous reports to the Council, I proposed the facilitation of cross-border deliveries through the establishment of neutral monitors.

I emphasize once again the urgency we face. Thousands of people continue to lose their lives every month. In the continued absence of a political solution to the crisis, humanitarian workers will continue to do everything they can, but we recognize that we cannot do it alone. We look to the Council to help us ensure that the parties to the conflict abide by their obligations under international law. Some 10.8 million women, men and children depend on that support.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on the Russian presidency of the Council this month. I thank you and the members of your team for convening many important meetings under your presidency. I also thank you for convening this meeting and allowing us to participate in it.

The briefing provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator reminds me of a well-known verse concerning a man at sea, shackled to his vessel and unable to move, who is warned not to get wet. Under-Secretary-General Amos presented a partial account of the humanitarian situation in Syria, on which I will brief the Council myself.

This meeting affords us an important opportunity to inform the members of the Council and of the United Nations as a whole on the reality of the humanitarian situation in Syria in all its dimensions, as well as the serious falsehoods and gaps contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/427) on the implementation of resolution 2139 (2014) . In order to avoid irritating certain representatives present in the Chamber by referring to particular scandals, I shall confine myself to referring to certain parts of the report itself.

Paragraph 3 of the report refers to the ongoing fighting between so-called "armed opposition groups and extremist forces". Paragraph 7 states that "[i]nfighting between opposition groups also intensified, as the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) gained ground in the east". Paragraph 12 refers to "armed opposition groups, including Ahrar Al-Sham and Jabhat Al-Nusra".

As a matter of fact, it is scandalous that an official report issued on behalf of the Secretary-General refers to certain organizations, classified by the Security Council as terrorist groups, as "armed opposition groups" in Syria — Jabhat Al-Nusra and other terrorist groups. This is not an unintended oversight. In fact, the Secretary-General's Spokesperson has used the same language, despite our having dispatched, in vain, numerous official correspondences emphasizing the impropriety of using such language.

We would like to ask the Under-Secretary-General why her report does not refer to the actual names of those terrorist groups, which are affiliated with Al-Qaida. She has classified them as "armed opposition" and "extremist" groups. For example, the report labels the terrorist group Jabhat Al-Nusra "armed opposition", meaning that it is not part of the extremist groups. In the opinion of Ms. Amos, what exactly constitutes an extremist group?

The report cites new exaggerated numbers regarding people in need in Syria, as compared to previous figures. The number of those in need is said to have increased, rising suddenly to 10.8 million — an increase of 1.5 million. The number of people in need residing in areas that are difficult to reach is said to amount to 4.7 million — an increast of 1.2 million. The report does not mention how they arrived at those inflated numbers.

My Government has lodged a complaint with the United Nations Resident Representative in Syria with regard to the perfunctory way in which some senior United Nations officials have arrived at the inaccurate and undocumented statistics concerning the humanitarian situation and people in need in Syria, as well as about the dishonest dissemination of that information by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Damascus just as deliberations are taking place to adopt a new resolution on the humanitarian situation.

The drafters of the report have gone beyond their mandate in mentioning the presidential elections in Syria, which have nothing to do with resolution 2139 (2014). They are a sovereign, constitutional right and do not run counter to the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). To the contrary, the elections are in line with that document: to preserve Syria's constitutional institutions. That is a main element of the communiqué.

Another strange paradox in the report is evidenced in the following statement:

> "The United Nations remains unable to provide a verified assessment of the presence and activity of non-Syrian fighters on a nationwide scale." (*S/2014/427, para. 9*)

Despite my Government's hundreds of official letters to the Secretary-General and the Security Council and the open official Western statements about documented numbers of so-called "foreign fighters" in Syria, the Secretary-General and OCHA continue to be unable to verify the veracity of the situation.

In addition to all that, we are also surprised that the report ignores the fact that the main reason for the emergence and worsening of the humanitarian situation is rooted in the rise and escalation of terrorism in Syria. Terrorist armed groups have targeted safe civilian areas, pushing out the population and destroying infrastructure and institutions. Addressing the humanitarian crisis in certain areas in Syria cannot be carried out just by providing assistance.

Those who drafted the report would have done better to ascribe responsibility to the States supporting terrorism in Syria, including Israel, Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, instead of questioning the presence of foreign fighters and the effectiveness of the steps taken by our Government to address humanitarian needs.

Among the other paradoxes in the report is its ignorance of the imposition by certain States of illegal, unliteral and coercive measures against our people, which has directly impacted living conditions. It is therefore necessary to point out the dangerous impact of the sanctions, which serves to expose the double standards on the part of some senior Secretariat officials in addressing the humanitarian situation in my country.

Some States claiming to care for the Syrian people have chosen throw enormous amounts of money at buying weapons for the terrorists in Syria, rather than devoting those resources to the 2014 humanitarian appeal — which is funded at just 29 per cent. A headline in yesterday's *The New York Times* reads, "After Opening Way to Rebels, Turkey Is Paying a Heavy Price". Yet the Secretary-General and Ms. Amos have no proof that there are foreign fighters in Syria.

The Syrian Government provides 75 per cent of the humanitarian assistance in Syria. The Government has taken a number of steps to enable the United Nations to expand its activities, including developing a new implementation mechanism to organize relief assistance convoys in a way that can provide assistance to our people as soon as possible, establishing a branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the governorate of Al-Suwayda to cover the southern region, as well as facilitating United Nations access to many areas throughout most parts of the country, including the governorate surrounding Damascus, as well as Aleppo and Dar'a.

A report by the World Food Programme states that many improvements have been made in seriously troubled areas. Ms. Amos stated that millions of people had received assistance, that children had been immunized and that food had arrived. She did not say how all of that happened. Did it happen without the assistance of the Syrian Government? We have continued to accede to the demands of the international community to deliver assistance from Syria's borders with Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182. It is clear that her report ignores the obstacles the Turkish authorities have created to allowing humanitarian assistance to enter Syria through the border crossing at Nusaybin while using the same crossing to let terrorists through.

My Government is committed to its responsibility to alleviate our people's humanitarian burdens, and we are ready to take whatever measures are necessary to

achieve that, as long as they comply with our national laws and our sovereignty. In that regard, we would like to welcome positive involvement by the United Nations, by which I mean its involvement in a way that mitigates the humanitarian situation in Syria. We categorically reject some States' use of the machinery of the United Nations in order to implement narrow political agendas that run counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, just as we reject the efforts of some States to manipulate the Organization to target certain countries. The invasions of Iraq, Libya and some other States were allowed to go through very smoothly, and there are some who have found it easy to interfere with the Organization. The United Nations belongs to its Member States, and we are one of its founding States. The United Nations is not part of the private sector, to be exploited by the powerful and influential in order to achieve domination and bloodshed.

The President *(spoke in Russian)*: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Since this is the last meeting of the Council for the month of June 2014, before inviting Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their staffs and the Secretariat of the Council, for all the support they have given us.

It has been a very busy month, and we succeeded in reaching consensus on a number of important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone or without the hard work, support and constructive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well the interpreters, translators, meeting services staff and sound engineers. As we wind up our presidency, on behalf of the whole Council I wish the delegation of Rwanda success in its work presiding over the Council in July.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.